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## THE PHILIPPINE PROBLEM FROM A FILIPINO STANDPOINT.

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IN treating of Philippine questions, it is of great importance to know at the outset whether the Filipinos are a political unit, capable of pursuing a common object and of attaining it; whether, in short, they constitute a true nationality, or whether, on the contrary, they are merely tribes, an accidental combination of elements, without mutual affinity and ready to damage or annihilate each other.

It is clear that, in speaking of the Filipino people, we refer especially to that predominant part which is composed of seven millions of Christian Filipinos, and make little account of the remaining six hundred thousand, whether they be Itas, Moros or Igorrotes, who belong to a separate category, and who, by reason of their insignificance in numbers, and their lack of European culture, bear a social and political relation to the Christian Filipinos similar to that which the North-American Indians bore to the people of the United States during the first fifty years of the history of that nation. These Christian Filipinos, that is to say, the Tagalogs, Visayans, Ilocanos, Bicolans, Pangasinanos and Pampangos (to name only the principal groups), are from the same Malayan stock\* that, in pre-Spanish times, came to populate the archipelago.

Although it may appear strange, the fact which has given the

\* The word "Tagalog," by which is signified one of the most important nuclei of the Filipino population, is derived from "*taga-ilog*," the "dwellers upon the river," and this name was given to all of the early Malays that came to the islands, who before their immigration lived upon the banks of a Malayan river.

greatest strength to the claim that the Filipinos are composed of tribes is also, without doubt, that which furnishes the best evidence that they form a homogeneous whole. Because the Filipinos speak various dialects, some people believe they do not constitute a nation. But one who makes a slight study of these dialects promptly sees they are no more than variations of a single original language, which has become modified for reasons that only a prolonged study of pre-Spanish Philippine history can explain. The slight mutual intercourse among the early Filipinos, living in islands and regions isolated from each other, gave rise to the differentiations that produced the dialects. But the physical characteristics that mark the Tagalogs, Visayans, Ilocanos, Bicol, etc., show at a glance their close relationship.

An appeal to history makes the point still clearer. The unifying effect of Christian civilization, the acts in which the Filipino people united in order vigorously to oppose the all-embracing influence of the Friars under the Spanish régime, and, later, the very war that was waged by all Filipinos against Spain and the United States for the sake of independence, are practical demonstrations of a real and definite unity. Notwithstanding that the settled policy of the Spanish domination, represented by the Friar influence, was to divide the Filipinos, and so govern more conveniently, it may be safely said that it would be difficult to find, in the last fifty years, a single Filipino who has felt himself a stranger or indifferent to the common interests; while, in general, all Filipinos have shared in the joys and woes that events have brought to their country. With such facts in view, only those with a warped judgment can fail to recognize that in the Philippines there is being developed a people whose political individuality must soon or late be recognized. An American, or a European, can from his point of view have doubts whether the Filipinos could to-day establish and sustain an independent government. But, if he knows Filipino history, if he is capable of giving a just value to the progress achieved by the Filipinos under a system of government in which everything tended to prevent their improvement and their advance, he will recognize much that was heroic in their efforts, and he will be inclined rather to meditate on what they might have become under happier auspices than to judge of them by undertakings never brought to a successful issue.

At the present time, we find ourselves under the American sovereignty that has come to replace that of Spain. That American sovereignty has been accepted in the belief that it would give the Filipinos a chance to pursue their own development, to acquire experience for themselves, and to face the responsibilities that history rightfully places upon those peoples who hold their destinies in their own hands. The Filipinos wish to make a trial on their own account. They wish to learn the art of self-government by practising it, for that is the only way to know its secrets. Are there difficulties in the path, and even dangers? Then it is worthy of our effort to meet these difficulties and dangers—if they exist—and vanquish them. Until the country sees her own children as the predominating element in her government, the most important step under American sovereignty in the Philippines will not have been taken. We know, from what we hear and what we read, that not a few Americans insist that the control of the government and its administration shall remain in the hands of American functionaries; while others, not content with appropriating the lion's share, throw upon the whole Filipino race the shadow of distrust, and with injurious intent openly declare, or covertly insinuate, that it is incapable of understanding and organizing a republican system of government. When we learn of such things, we infer that there is in some Americans a prejudice that does not permit them to render full justice to other peoples.

With respect to those who desire the United States to have a hold practically absolute over the government of the islands, we have to say that they misconceive the Philippine question and do not correctly trace its lines. The Filipino people has received under Spain not an Oriental but a European education, which has brought into being a body of men capable of directing the government of the country. It has often been said that the great majority of the population lack not only political experience, but even the most elementary education. But this last is not a correct statement, for, apart from Spanish, the Filipinos who cannot at least read and write their own dialect\* are few and rare indeed. As for political experience, it is

\* A similar condition is to be noted in a great part of the Japanese nation. Yet, nevertheless, no one would have the right to say that the Japanese, who know only their own dialect, are wholly ignorant.

not strange that the people in large part should be without it, simply because they have always been without the opportunity of acquiring it. This, however, furnishes only one reason the more for not withholding for any further period the exercise of political rights from a people that has shed its blood to obtain them. When a people rises as one man and fights for a thing, it must be that the people not only knows what it is fighting for, but that it recognizes to the full the value of the prize.

Little need be said about the educational progress made by the Filipinos, or the advance they have made, under the existing government, in their participation in the work of the judiciary and other branches of administration; for it is presumed the American public is already informed of the interest that a Filipino family takes in sending its children to public schools, and of the efficiency, loyalty and devotion to duty with which Filipino officials have performed that part of the general task which fell to them. Let us, therefore, consider the question dispassionately, on the supposition that the object of the presence of the United States in the Philippines is to aid the Filipinos to establish a free government of their own. Now, it is evident that it is not a question of forming a nation *de novo*, but rather of carrying through a work complementary to that which has been already done, and this does not necessitate on the part of the United States a retention of supreme control over the islands. All Filipinos, it would appear, wish, so far as suitable and practicable, to adopt in the Philippines the excellent system of government that has been found to work so well in the United States. But the very labor of selection and adaptation can better be done by Filipinos, who can be supposed to see more clearly what is suitable to the conditions of the country, and therefore what is desirable, and can be trusted to work more conscientiously. It is true that the Filipinos, in beginning this difficult work, will need the aid of the Americans, because in such cases the counsels of experience have a priceless value. It is true, also, that the Filipinos, following the example of Japan, wish to extend widely in their country the knowledge of the English tongue, although not for the sake of becoming more civilized, but rather because English is the indispensable vehicle of communication with the most advanced portion of the human race. But, granting that everything goes to show that the help of the Americans

in the government and in educational work would be useful, almost, indeed, indispensable for a certain period, it is wholly unnecessary to conclude for that reason that the Filipinos must be deprived of the responsibility of their own government.

It is neither impatience, nor yet the ambition to become the chief figures in the government, that impels the Filipinos to call urgently for the establishment of self-government. It is only the desire to simplify difficulties, which are each day becoming greater and more to be feared. The unsettled political condition of the islands encourages many wholly unscrupulous American residents of the Philippines constantly to urge that the United States should treat the Filipinos as Great Britain treats her Crown Colonies. Such an attitude naturally serves to inspire distrust in the breast of the Filipino. Would it not be salutary, therefore, and would it not have a good effect on this class of Americans, a most numerous body, if the tangible evidence of *deeds* should be afforded that the final object of the American occupation is to give to the Filipinos a government *by Filipinos*? Although the conduct of many American officials gives an exalted idea of their mission in the Philippines, unfortunately the same cannot be said of them all. Thus these circumstances unite to show why the American Government receives no great support among the masses, for they retain a lively recollection of the shiftiness of the Spanish régime.

Often it is asked why the Filipinos do not insist upon their personal rights, as guaranteed them by the organic law of the Philippines, and why they allow abuses to flourish, or a punishable offence to go unpunished. Some have attributed this phenomenon to a lack of acquaintance with the rights conferred upon them by that act. Now, it is not possible that a person who is the object of an injury should be ignorant that he has a legal remedy. The real trouble in the Philippines is that, justly or unjustly, there is a lack of faith in the possibility of obtaining it. Other phenomena of the same description might be cited. Only when in the government of the islands the native element shall have its proper representation will confidence be restored, and the working of such a government will be more efficient and will better subserve the good of the country. Not only, then, do considerations of justice, but also considerations of political expediency, counsel the establishment of a truly representative gov-

ernment, as the sole means of bringing about a normal situation in the public affairs of the Philippines.

In intimate connection with the modification of the provisional government of the Philippines should be the definition of the future relations between the islands and the United States; that is to say, whether there shall be annexation, a protectorate or absolute independence. It is not the purpose of these lines to resolve these questions by considering the movements of American purposes and opinions. To discuss *a posteriori* whether the United States acquired their sovereignty over the Philippines legitimately, or illegitimately, would be no less indiscreet. The Filipinos are more anxious in regard to the present and future conduct of the United States in the Philippines, and, if that is good and beneficial to the country, the question of the past should be a secondary consideration.

But what is the attitude of the Filipino people, or at least of a majority of the Filipino people, upon the question of its own future? It would require a careful investigation to discover the true opinion of the country. With the exception of the Federal Party, there exists to-day no organized political groups with their ideas concretely expressed in their platforms, and thus the difficulty of investigation is greatly augmented.

Even the Federal Party is to-day in a period of critical evolution—perhaps of radical and important transformation.\*

At the beginning, the Federal Party was partly composed of those who had taken part in the revolution, but who were then sincerely in favor of peace, of the adoption of a government upon the American plan, and of a process of evolution in order to bring this all happily about. Others came into the party when they became convinced of the intention of the United States to retain the islands, and they cherished for a time the hope of forming a part of the American Union, believing in good faith that, having lost the hope of independence, the best opportunity for the Filipinos was to enjoy the same rights as are enjoyed by the citizens of the Republic that had come to assume sovereignty over the country. Many others, and these formed the majority, when they saw that the war was both use-

\* At the present time, the Federal Party is in process of reorganization upon a new declaration of principles and a new platform, and it can be asserted with confidence that, whatever other results are reached, the idea of annexation or federation will not be countenanced.

less and prejudicial, and that to compel the United States to grant independence was not feasible, proposed to themselves first of all to work with the Federal Party for the pacification of the country, but without abandoning the idea of attaining independence later on, by peaceable means and by appealing to the sense of justice of the American people.

Thus, as is seen, in treating of the only organized political party in the Philippines, it is easy to fall into error, unless the necessary knowledge is had of the men fighting in its ranks and of the events that led to its formation. As for the rest of the people that do not belong to the Federal Party, they are frankly in favor of independence in short order, and do not care for the process of evolution that is the characteristic idea of the mis-named Federalists. Nevertheless, it would be a great mistake to believe that the Nationalists cling to-day, with the same rigidity as during the war and the years immediately following it, to the doctrine of independence immediate, complete and absolute. The growing rivalries between the conquering Powers resulting in an aggressive policy in the Far East, the experience that Korea is actually undergoing, finding herself, against her will, enveloped in a bloody war, have opened the eyes of the irreconcilable Filipinos and have brought them to the belief that of equal importance with the obtaining independence itself is the securing of a guarantee that that independence shall not be a thing precarious, at the mercy of the ambitions of the strong.

There are still two other political groups in the Philippines, namely, the Liberals and the Democrats. But it can be affirmed that the reason for their existence is not very clear, for the Liberals have aims similar to those of the Federal Evolutionists, and the Democrats are almost as pronounced advocates of nationalism as the Nationalists themselves. The so-called Labor Party forms a group apart, and, although its organization is not active in general politics, it sympathizes with the Nationalists and Radicals.

It results, then, that in reality there exist only two great parties in the Philippines; on the one hand are the Federalists, who should be called the Evolutionists; and, on the other, are those of every political complexion who favor speedy independence. Taking, then, into consideration only those points in which both sides agree, the following can be accepted as representing the aspirations of a great majority of the people:



1. The immediate establishment of a government for Filipinos by Filipinos, with the aid of the Americans;\*

2. The future independence of the country—as soon as practicable, according to the idea of the Nationalists; after a period of evolution, according to the Evolutionists;

3. A Protectorate by the United States over the Philippine Republic, or, if that is not realizable, an international guarantee, obtained with the aid and influence of the Government of the United States, securing the inviolability of Philippine independence.

The perspicacity of that noted American statesman, Mr. Root, ex-Secretary of War, as well as the profound knowledge of the aspirations of the Filipinos that he acquired during the time when he was ably filling his elevated position, enabled him, in his address before the Republican Convention in Chicago, to trace in broad lines the policy that appears at once to be the most satisfactory to the Filipinos and, at the same time, the most just, and hence the most worthy of the great American people. The eloquent words in which Mr. Root substantially echoes the true aspirations of the Philippine people will have a most beneficial effect on public tranquillity in the Philippines, and will powerfully aid in promoting a good understanding between Americans and Filipinos. I desire to conclude by reproducing the wise recommendations of Mr. Root in respect to American policy in the Philippines:

“None can foretell the future; but there seems no reasonable cause to doubt that, under the policy already effectively inaugurated, the institutions already implanted, and the processes already begun, in the Philippine Islands, if these be not repressed and interrupted, the Philippine people will follow in the footsteps of the people of Cuba; that more slowly, indeed, because they are not as advanced, yet as surely, they will grow in capacity for self-government, and, receiving power as they grow in capacity, will come to bear substantially such relations to the people of the United States as do now the people of Cuba, differing in details as conditions and needs differ, but the same in principle and the same in beneficial results.”

JUAN SUMULONG.

\* See the speech of acceptance by President Roosevelt, July 27th, 1904.